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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DEP ISSUES AMENDMENT TO WEST OLD TOWN LANDFILL LICENSE

(AUGUSTA)—The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has approved changes to the West Old Town Landfill's operating license. DEP Commissioner Dawn Gallagher signed the amendment today, following nearly six months of study, comment and review. The approval allows an increase in the height of the facility and the disposal of additional waste streams.

The official document supporting the approval comprehensively addresses more than 20 issues, construction specifications and operational requirements. Detailed language presents findings regarding: surface and ground water, water quality monitoring, air quality (dust, landfill gas, odor control), design elements (liner, berm, leachate collection and storage, gas management, closure), acceptable wastes, traffic, visual impacts, noise, stormwater management, and stability, among others.

"This is a good, thorough document," said Commissioner Gallagher. "It provides security that the landfill meets and will continue to meet Maine's environmental standards. A tremendous amount of technical experience and expertise was tapped in putting it all together.

"Having said that, though, I think this experience is itself a sad commentary on society. We shouldn't be forced into a position of treating the symptom, an operating license for a landfill, instead of the underlying disease, which is our throw-away society.

"We simply must do a better job of reducing the amount of waste we create. We need to look to ourselves to shrink the waste stream."

DEP issued a draft version of the amendment approval on February 17. A notable difference in the final document is an extension of the post-closure

monitoring requirement. The early draft called for post-closure monitoring at the facility for a period of 30 years. The final approval requires that monitoring continue until DEP approves its cessation.

In addition, the Department has secured assurances from the landfill's operator to address concerns outside the regulatory purview governing application review. These concerns were expressed during the extensive public comment process initiated late last fall.

"I have received letters from Casella confirming additional commitments on several fronts," said the Commissioner. "These will permit additional independent water quality analysis, assure a responsive complaint handling process and investigate the feasibility of technology to speed up degradation of material deposited in the landfill. All are important and all are valuable add-ons to the protections provided by the license itself."

The West Old Town Landfill was originally licensed by Maine's Board of Environmental Protection in 1993. In June of 2003, the State (through the State Planning Office) was authorized by the legislature to acquire and select a long term operator of the landfill. The operating contract has been awarded to Casella Waste Systems, Inc.

The amendment approval document has been posted on the DEP website (www.MaineDEP.com), along with a document responding to comments received during the application review process. Both can be accessed by clicking on "West Old Town Landfill" on the web page. Copies of the transcript from the March 29-30 forum will be available on compact disk. Contact Sherrie Edwards, 207-287-2651, for ordering information.

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